

of nearly three-fourths of the Senate, five committees, and countless staff who have worked to try to help States and communities put an end to this crisis that is ravaging virtually every community in America.

The House of Representatives has passed its version. We have our bipartisan urgency to work together. No mother should have to go through what Becky Savage has gone through. It is time to finish our work and help States and communities bring an end to the opioid crisis. This legislation would give us many of the tools we need to do just that.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Arizona.

ATTORNEY GENERAL SESSIONS

Mr. FLAKE. Mr. President, in the annals of "President's Say the Darndest Things," last week's Twitter outburst will stand out, at least for me, because the President attacked the Attorney General of the United States for simply doing the job he swore an oath to do.

Of course, it wasn't the first time the President has so diminished himself, but this particular slander was leveled at the Attorney General for having the temerity to prosecute public corruption by Members of Congress who also happen to belong to the President's political party.

That is right. The President attacked Mr. Sessions by name for refusing to cover up allegations of Republican misconduct. The President's concern was not for justice but for the political fortunes of the accused, because their congressional seats might now be at risk of falling to Democrats. In doing this, the President is projecting a vision onto the system of American justice that is both bizarre and, more importantly, destructive.

Of course, the only truly shocking thing about this statement from the President is that, given what all of us have become accustomed to during this Presidency—or, even worse, have become numb to—this Twitter eruption was not at all surprising. This numb acceptance is an appalling statement on the very real threat to our democratic institutions.

At this point, it might be too late for tutorials on the American justice system, but it certainly bears repeating that in order for justice to truly be served, justice must be based in empirical truth and must be absolutely carried out independent of politics, period.

No President—any President—administers the justice system in America, any more than he or she decrees what is objective truth. In this country, justice and truth operate quite independent of the dictates of even the most powerful of offices.

The reasons for this point are obvious to most, but we know by now that this particular President seems to have a profound unease with both justice and truth and so has been at unrelent-

ing war with both, virtually since the moment he swore the oath—not because there is any deficiency in justice or truth that requires his intervention, mind you, but for other less noble reasons. The President seems to think that the office confers on him the ability to decide who and what gets investigated in the United States and who and what does not.

Weekly, it seems, this President has been threatening to "get involved" in the function of the Justice Department—sometimes intimidating, sometimes plainly threatening to corrupt the independence of justice in America.

He has overtly expressed a desire for his political opponents to be investigated, and almost 2 years into his Presidency, he presides over boisterous rallies where the last election is relitigated and chants of "lock her up" fill the halls.

None of this is normal or acceptable, but his is not mere recklessness. It seems to be a deliberate program, by which he intends to weaken the institution of American justice, threaten its independence, and perhaps set the stage for some future assault on it—the firing of the attorney general, the deputy attorney general, and perhaps even the special counsel.

It has been said that the President deserves to have an attorney general of his choice, a top lawyer with whom he is compatible. This is true. The President's appointment powers are clear, and all of his appointees serve at the pleasure of the President. But what no President deserves is a top lawyer who is simply there to do his bidding. The Attorney General is not the President's personal lawyer, and his job is not to protect the President from damaging facts or to turn the power of American justice onto the President's enemies or to direct Justice Department investigations in any particular way that is either politically motivated or presupposes guilt or innocence or favors any outcome whatsoever, other than that which is supported by the evidence and truth. The Attorney General's job description, as tweeted last week by the President, bears scant resemblance to the Attorney General's job in a constitutional democracy.

So I rise today because the Founders gave us the article I branch of this government that they conceived and the responsibility to curb such reckless behavior.

Thus far, I believe we have all been so incredulous at the daily excess and ever hopeful—hopeful beyond any reason—that this President would at last begin to inhabit the office in a more responsible fashion that we have been somewhat uncertain what to do.

First and foremost, we must speak out. We cannot be quiet when the moment requires us to defend the democratic norms under which this system functions, and without which our system ceases to function. The President has repeatedly and over time heedlessly breached these norms. If we say

nothing, then, we become accomplices in the destruction of these democratic norms.

The Senate is not the place to come for deniability. We must do what we can to curb the destructive impulses of this White House. We must encourage the administration of justice. That means voicing our support for Mr. Mueller and his team. We have passed bipartisan legislation out of the Senate Judiciary Committee—legislation to protect the special counsel. I call on the majority leader to bring this legislation to the Senate floor.

We must also say in no uncertain terms that to call this investigation a "witch hunt" is wrong. To call Mr. Mueller's team "thugs" is wrong. Relentlessly slandering the Attorney General of the United States is wrong. It is a travesty, and it is unbecoming of the Office of the Presidency.

I would say to the Attorney General: Stand firm. You spent your life in public service, in the service of your country. At the risk of being presumptuous, I will say that these days of your service, right now, during this crucial period in which we have a President who in a malign fashion is actively testing the limits of his power and the independence of American justice, your determination to safeguard the independence of the Justice Department at the same time that you have been under assault by the President has verged on heroic. In your long career, you will render no more consequential service to your country. Stand firm, Attorney General Sessions.

I appeal to the leadership of this body to speak out. You don't have to speak out at every Twitter outburst, but when the President so blatantly calls for the Department of Justice to act as an arm of the Republican Party, then, the leaders of the Republican Party in this body need to stand and say that the President is out of bounds.

We all have our pulls to conscience. Most recently for me, I hear the whisper so well described a few weeks ago—the whisper over my shoulder that says: We are better than this. America is better than this. In a time of rank tribalism, we need to remember that we are all Americans. That is our only tribe. It is to the rule of law and the ideals of our founding that we owe our allegiance.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Arizona.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Mr. FLAKE. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to executive session for the en bloc consideration of the following nominations: Executive Calendar Nos. 933, 934.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.